

Government. These men and women are made of the same mettle as the first responders who were on the scene September 11 in New York City and in Washington, D.C., but they need the tools to do their jobs. They have communication systems that are woefully inadequate for the jobs they need to do.

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Fire and police are unable to communicate on the same radios. Regrettably, the supplemental the administration just sent over does not address these needs. While it provides overall increases for homeland security, it contains no funds to provide interoperable communication equipment so that police, firefighters and emergency workers can talk to one another during an emergency.

I am hopeful that these concerns are addressed as the debate on the supplemental bill progresses. Our first responders must have enhanced communications equipment to respond adequately to emergencies. If police, firefighters and other first responders are unable to communicate with each other, lives will be lost due to lack of coordination; and that simply should not happen.

Let me also say that I am sympathetic to the needs of our big cities, especially those that have suffered from terrorist attacks in the past. We should work together to make certain that law enforcement and other first responders in those cities have the resources they need to respond to future threats and attacks.

At the same time, we should not neglect the needs of first responders in smaller communities. Let us not forget, the second largest act of terrorism committed in the United States soil occurred in Oklahoma City, which did not rank high on any list of targets that we have seen recently.

Quite simply, acts of terrorism, by either domestic or international sources can occur anywhere at any time, and our local first responders must have the tools necessary to respond.

In my district, preparing for potential attack also means recognizing the threat posed by agriterrorism or the use of disease or outbreak to cripple the agricultural industry. As we have seen with the outbreak of bovine TB, exotic Newcastle disease, the introduction of an organism that can be devastating to the industry and a threat to the Nation's food supply.

To further highlight the challenge facing our first responders, I want to focus on one of the local law enforcement agencies in my district, the sheriff's department in Stanislaus County.

I recently spoke with our sheriff, Les Weidman, who has got his hands full, not only dealing with the threat posed by future terrorist attacks but also trying to deal with the methamphetamine crisis in California's central valley. Like sheriffs across the country, Sheriff Weidman has seen a dramatic increase in meth labs in our area.

Sheriff Weidman recently held a news conference where he uncovered a link between drug production and terrorist groups. Mr. Speaker, this is a disturbing turn of events. He announced that millions of dollars of profits from drug deals had been diverted to Middle Eastern terrorist organizations. While his efforts are laudable, his small force of 450 officers is barely enough to do the job.

No matter how dedicated they are, without adequate tools they will not be able to get the job done alone. In fact, Sheriff Weidman recently told me that his department cannot afford the most basic protective gear for his deputies because of the cost. Only 35 out of the 450 officers that he has on duty have been issued protective kits against the use of chemical or biological weapons.

Addressing the threats posed by terrorism is a Federal issue with national implications, but dealing with the immediate effects of a terrorist attack will most likely be performed by local law enforcement officers and other first responders. What sort of message is the Federal Government sending to the local men and women on the front lines in our home districts if we cannot even provide them with the basic tools and resources necessary to carry out the most pressing national concern?

I would submit today that we are not doing nearly enough, Mr. Speaker. As we move forward this year and in this session of Congress, I hope we can work together to provide our law enforcement officials with the resources they need to protect our communities. This is not, nor should it be, a partisan issue.

I have been pleased to meet with a number of administration officials since taking office, and I am impressed with the level of commitment and dedication they place in protecting our homeland; but when local law enforcement officials tell me that communications capability is locally inadequate, it is clear to me that we must do more.

Working together, I am confident that we can, in fact, do this. If we mean what we say about providing homeland security for our Nation, we must start by providing support to our local first responders.

COMMENDATION FOR MEREDITH BROADBENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CRANE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend a valuable member of my staff, a treasure who has served the Committee on Ways and Means for over 20 years. Meredith Broadbent, who serves as senior professional staff member to our Subcommittee on Trade, is a noted expert in all areas of trade policy but especially agriculture and textiles, two of the most complex areas. She has committed her career to

developing good trade policy, and she has been involved in every major trade initiative over the last 20 years.

Most recently, she was a key player in granting the President Trade Promotion Authority, according preferential trade benefits to the Caribbean, African and Andean countries, and extending permanent normal trade relations to China. Trade initiatives such as these are good for spurring U.S. economic growth but also to help foster a world that trades in freedom and lives in liberty and prosperity.

Ms. Broadbent's wise counsel, sound judgment, and thorough expertise will be truly missed. I am glad that she will continue to serve her country in the international trade arena as Assistant United States Trade Representative for Industry, Market Access and Telecommunications. She will be a tremendous asset to the Bush administration, and I wish her well.

Moreover, I know as chairman of the Subcommittee on Trade that I will still have the privilege of working with Meredith as our Assistant United States Trade Representative. God bless her.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REMOVE COLOMBIA FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, we are facing the first supplemental spending request to fund the war in Iraq and its aftermath and to partially support critical needs for our own homeland security. I expect we will be taking up that debate as early as next week.

I believe it is important that this Congress is finally beginning to debate the costs and the consequences of this war and how it will affect our homeland security, something we have failed to do for the last 5 months.

However, as I read the fine print of the administration's request, I see additional military assistance for Colombia. What is Colombia doing in a supplemental for the war in Iraq? There is a request for \$34 million in military aid for Colombia in the section for the Department of Defense/operations and maintenance to "increase the operational tempo for the unified campaign against narcotics trafficking and terrorist activities."

There is another \$34 million in military aid for Colombia in the State Department section, and there is an unspecified amount for Colombia under the international assistance programs/international security assistance for

foreign military financing, and it is my understanding that the State Department officials have informed some committee staff that Colombia's share of those funds will be around 36 to \$37 million.

All told, that is another \$100 million in additional military aid for Colombia. Mr. Speaker, that is more money than the State of Massachusetts will receive under the supplemental for critical homeland security priorities. It is more than most States will receive.

In Massachusetts, communities are laying off police, firefighters, and other emergency first responders. Dozens of our cities and towns have critical vacancies because many of our local police, our State police, our sheriffs, firefighters, and medical staff have been called to active duty and are right now serving in Iraq.

I have been told that there is just not enough money to help places like Seekonk or Worcester or Southborough fill these critical vacancies to keep our families safe; but apparently there is plenty of cash for Colombia.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that Colombia needs that cannot be handled through the regular authorization and appropriations process. Indeed, just last month on February 12, this Congress approved over \$500 million for Colombia for fiscal year 2003, \$400 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, and another \$99 million in foreign military financing.

For fiscal year 2004, the President has asked for more than \$700 million for Colombia in the foreign operations and defense appropriations bills. Those bills will begin moving through subcommittee shortly after Congress returns from our April recess.

U.S. military and other aid for Colombia has been approved and is in the spending pipeline ready to go. On Monday, when he sent up the supplemental request, President Bush asked the Congress "to refrain from attaching items not directly related to the emergency at hand."

Mr. Speaker, Colombia falls into that category. These requests for Colombia are unrelated to the needs of our troops and our missions in Iraq and South Asia and unrelated to meeting the needs of our own homeland security; and I call upon the administration to withdraw the request for Colombia from this supplemental, and if that fails to happen, I ask the Committee on Appropriations to eliminate those requests and shift those resources to help our States and our communities meet critical hometown security priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Colombia in February. I traveled to several sites throughout the country. I met with local military commanders, religious leaders, governors, mayors, labor leaders, school teachers, displaced families, indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, lawyers, the magistrates of the constitutional court, members of the Colombia Government and U.S. embassy

staff. I was also in Colombia 2 years ago, and the difference is striking.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, today the human rights situation is worse. The violence has increased. There is less political space for people to organize, speak out or voice alternatives to official policy. The country is increasingly militarized; and there is little support for basic economic development, unless it comes from other countries or the U.N.

The 40-year-old civil war in Colombia is dirtier and uglier than ever and shows no signs of ending anytime soon. The nature of the U.S. role in that war has changed. We are now more deeply involved in a counterinsurgency than ever before. Americans have died and are being held hostage by guerrilla forces. The Colombian military continues to work with awful right-wing paramilitary forces.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to see American men and women dying in a war in Colombia where the Colombian military is still reluctant to engage directly insurgent and paramilitary forces. I think it is a mistake for the United States to escalate its military involvement in Colombia.

Some of my colleagues may disagree, but at the very least, this escalation deserves a full debate. We must not allow such a dramatic increase in our military involvement to pass without comment and votes. Congress must assert its proper role.

Withdraw the requests for Colombia in this supplemental. Put that money to better use by supporting our police and firefighters here at home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. McCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor with an issue that I

feel the Members of this House should think about.

The BBC carried a story on March 27 saying that there was proof of biological weapons found. They found protection suits, gas masks; and officials argued that these precautions were not to counter the threat of coalition attacks, as the Iraqis would know that the United Kingdom and U.S. forces in the gulf do not possess chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Hoon, who is the Secretary in the British Government, conceded that the discovery of the suits was obviously not conclusive proof that Iraqi forces were set to use chemical or biological weapons, but he added, "It's clearly indicative of an intention, otherwise why equip his own forces to deal with a threat which he knows we do not have?"

I just received an e-mail message from one of my friends in the British House of Lords who said to me there was a news story on the BBC this morning about the U.S. administration saying they may be prepared to use nonlethal chemical weapons in Iraq in an urban situation where it would be preferable to stun people rather than kill them. Now I do not know how we put those two stories together. We think the Iraqis are getting ready to do something; but the BBC, the very same, carries the story which we will never find in an American newspaper or on American television that we are talking about using chemical weapons.

My correspondent went on to say this would be illegal; they are very nasty substances and can kill children. They would be effective against military forces equipped with even rudimentary gas masks. I am sure my colleagues will be speaking out against such a thing. However, it might help them to know that I am hoping to ask our government what action they would take in such a situation.

□ 1430

"My party will certainly call for the U.K. troops to cease work with American forces if they use illegal chemical weapons, even nonlethal ones. If it happens during the Easter recess, we would call for a recall of Parliament to debate it."

Mr. Speaker, I bring this to the floor because the media in this country has done a terrible job reporting the war. They give us one side, they are all embedded inside our military, and they get whatever they are supposed to put out about what is going on. They are not looking broadly across the horizon at what is happening.

The Washington Post carried a story today that the American people are so dissatisfied with the American press that the number one hit on the Internet is Al Jazeera, a Qatar television station that provides another point of view. Americans are trying to find out what the truth is.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know, I cannot make head nor tail out of this. I looked